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1962/10/22

78. Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Current Intelligence,
Current Intelligence Memorandum, "Timing of the
Soviet Military Buildup in Cuba," 22 October 1962

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
22 October 1962

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Timing of the Soviet Military Buildup in
Cuba

1. The Soviet decision to embark on the current military buildup in Cuba probably was made in April 1962. The decision paralleled political and economic moves which greatly strengthened the Soviet-Cuban relationship. The program probably was planned and set in motion during the period April through June. In the second week of July the first shipments of materiel began to leave Soviet ports, accompanied by passenger ships carrying military personnel. These units arrived in Cuba during the last week in July and by 1 August work had begun at several locations in Cuba.

2. Prior to April 1962 the USSR's policy toward Castro's self-proclaimed adherence to Communism was still unclear and its support of Cuba was within the bounds of "normal" Soviet trade and aid policy, i.e., ties governed by long-term credit agreements and Cuba's ability to pay. In early April, however, Moscow chose to acquiesce in Castro's assertion of his authority over the so-called "old Communists" and to acknowledge the "socialist" character of the Cuban regime. Shortly thereafter, negotiations for the bloc to come to the aid of Cuba's faltering economy were initiated, and in early May agreements were signed for the bloc to provide additional amounts of foodstuffs, consumer goods, raw materials, and other badly needed imports. A decision to undertake the current military buildup probably was made along with these economic and political moves. In return, agreement evidently was reached for stationing Soviet strategic forces on the island.

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3. The buildup in Cuba has been taking place in stages which can be distinguished reasonably well. The first deliveries of men and equipment arrived in late July, and through most of August they appear to have been primarily of equipment for SAM and coastal defense missile installations. Work started first in western Cuba and gradually spread throughout the island. Eight of the 12 Komar guided-missile boats were delivered in August, as well as some land armaments. We cannot determine precisely when the first equipment for MRBM/IRBM installations arrived, but available information suggests work on the first site began about 29 August and the first missiles of this kind probably arrived in the first half of September. Two top-level meetings between the Cubans and Khrushchev were held in this period; one when Raul Castro visited Moscow in July at the start of the shipments and one in late August - early September when Che Guevara traveled to the USSR.

4. Since early September, military shipments probably have included equipment for all the missile installations as well as aircraft and land armaments. Most of the 39 or more MIG-21s arrived during the first week of September. Two shipments of IL-28 bombers--22 aircraft in all--appear to have arrived in late September, and a third shipment may be en route. There is no sign of a slowdown in the military shipments; about 20 Soviet vessels are en route with probable military cargoes, and one or two are leaving Soviet ports almost daily.

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